

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A method for operating a radio station, comprising:
periodically receiving content files via a satellite ~~uplink~~downlink;
storing the received content files; and
retrieving, playing and broadcasting at least some of the stored content files in accordance with an electronic schedule, without syncing the playback and broadcast of the at least some of the stored content files to a real-time network feed.

Claim 2 (Currently Amended): The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic schedule is at least partly derived from a network schedule that is provided to the radio station via the satellite ~~uplink~~downlink.

Claim 3 (Original): The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic schedule is at least partly derived from a network schedule that is provided to the radio station via an internet connection.

Claim 4 (Currently Amended): ~~The method of claim 1, further comprising~~A method for operating a radio station, comprising:

periodically receiving content files via a satellite downlink;
storing the received content files;
generating ~~[[the]]~~an electronic schedule by merging i) a network schedule received from a content provider, and ii) a local schedule maintained at the radio station; and

retrieving, playing and broadcasting at least some of the stored content files in accordance with the electronic schedule.

Claim 5 (Original): The method of claim 4, wherein said network schedule and local schedule are merged once an hour to generate the electronic schedule for the next hour.

Claim 6 (Original): The method of claim 4, further comprising, when merging said network and local schedules:

- identifying breaks in the network schedule;
- determining, for each break, whether the local schedule specifies at least a minimum quantity of content for the break, and
 - i) if the local schedule specifies a minimum quantity of content for the break, filling the break with the specified content; and
 - ii) if the local schedule does not specify a minimum quantity of content for the break, filling the break with the specified content, if any, and optional content specified by the network schedule.

Claim 7 (Original): The method of claim 6, wherein the minimum quantity of content is at least ninety seconds of content.

Claim 8 (Original): The method of claim 6, wherein:

- the network schedule specifies optional content for each break in the network schedule; and
- if optional content is used to fill a break in the network schedule, all of the optional content specified for the break is used.

Claim 9 (Currently Amended): A method, comprising:

- providing a plurality of affiliate radio stations with content files via a satellite-based content delivery system;

providing each of the affiliate radio stations with an electronic schedule that instructs an automation system of the affiliate radio station to retrieve, play and broadcast ones of the content files, thereby generating a near real-time radio broadcast, the electronic schedule specifying breaks that may be dynamically resized or filled in different ways, based on each affiliate radio station's available content to fill the breaks.

Claim 10 (Original): The method of claim 9, wherein different electronic schedules are provided to the affiliate radio stations corresponding to each of a number of different radio broadcast formats.

Claim 11 (Original): The method of claim 9, wherein the electronic schedules provided to at least two of the affiliate radio stations each reference a given content file indicator; the method further comprising:

recording at least two different content files for the given content file indicator, and associating each of the different content files with a different token; and
in response to said different tokens, said satellite-based content delivery system providing a different content file to each of the at least two affiliate radio stations.

Claim 12 (Currently Amended): A radio network, comprising:

a plurality of affiliate radio stations;
a content provider, linked to the plurality of affiliate radio stations via a satellite-based content delivery system, providing content to each of the affiliates~~affiliate radio stations~~ in the form of discrete content files, and providing each of the affiliate radio stations with an electronic schedule that instructs an automation system of the affiliate radio station to retrieve, play and broadcast ones of the content files, thereby generating a near real-time radio broadcast, the electronic schedule specifying breaks that may be dynamically resized or filled in different ways, based on each affiliate radio station's available content to fill the breaks.

Claim 13 (Original): The radio network of claim 12, wherein the content provider uses a one-way link of the satellite-based content delivery system to transfer content files to ones of the affiliate radio stations.

Claim 14 (Original): The radio network of claim 13, wherein the content provider is further linked to the plurality of affiliate radio stations via a bidirectional internet return link that provides a backup connection for transferring content files to ones of the affiliate radio stations.

Claim 15 (Original): The radio network of claim 12, wherein the content provider comprises:

- an origination component providing operators of the content provider an interface to record and manage content files that are to be transmitted to the affiliate radio stations; and

- a distribution component to deliver said content files via the satellite-based content delivery system.

Claim 16 (Original): The radio network of claim 15, wherein the content provider further comprises an encapsulation component to encapsulate said content files prior to their distribution by the distribution component.

Claim 17 (Original): The radio network of claim 12, wherein the content provider provides content to different ones of the affiliate radio stations using only a single satellite channel of the satellite-based content delivery system.

Claims 18-22 (Canceled)

Claim 23 (New): The method of claim 4, further comprising, when merging said network and local schedules:

- identifying breaks in the network schedule; and

dynamically resizing each of the breaks based on availability of content in the local schedule to fill each of the breaks.

Claim 24 (New): A method for operating a radio station, comprising:

- periodically receiving content files via a satellite downlink;
- storing the received content files;
- receiving a network schedule from a content provider;
- identifying breaks in the network schedule;
- dynamically resizing the identified breaks based on the radio station's available content to fill the breaks; and
- retrieving, playing and broadcasting at least some of the stored content files in accordance with an electronic schedule that is at least partly derived from the network schedule.